



PERIYAR E.V. RAMASAMY

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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A biographical Sketch

(Translated by A S VENU)

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Periyar writings and Speeches translated by A S VENU



Dravidar Viduthalai Kazhagam

திராவிடர் விடுதலைக் கழகம்

PERIYAR E.V. RAMASAMY - A biographical Sketch

1879Sep17

PERIYAR E.V. RAMASAMY was born at Erode town in Tamil Nadu State - India Father : VENKATA (NAICKER) A popular rich merchant; Ardent devotee of Hindu religion. (A Vaishnavite) Mother : CHINNA THAYAMMAL alias MUTHAMMAL Brother-Elder : E.V. Krishnasamy Sisters Younger : KANNAMMAL;PONNUTHOY

1885Age6 He was sent to a small primary school normally run at a House - pial in those days.

1889Age10 His school career ended within 5 years.

1891Age12 He entered into his father's trade.

1895

He used to hear Tamil Vaishnav religious Gurus talks on mythologies at his house, enjoying their hospitality. As a boy, he started questioning the contradictions and illusions in the fables of Hindu deities spread by the Aryan Race ie., Brahmins for subjugating Dravidian Race.

* Blossoming of rationalism and atheism slowly in the brain of this youth - Ramasamy.

1898

*He married NAGAMMAL, aged 13.

*He reformed his orthodox wife and sowed rationalistic views in her mind.

1900 He became the father of a female - child which expired within 5 months and thereafter he had no children.

1904

- * He undertook “renunciation” of family because of the harsh reprimand by his father.
- * He went first to Vijayawada in Andhra State. Then he proceeded to Hyderabad and Kolkatta.

INSULT AT KAASI ENLIGHTENS HIS RATIONALISM

- * He reached Kaasi (Varanasi), a noted sacred town of Hindu pilgrimage on the bank of the River Ganges. There he could not get free meals easily at choultries which exclusively fed Brahmins forbidding other Hindu castes.
- * Having starved severely for some days, this handsome young man Ramasamy found no other better way than to enter a choultry with the appearance of a Brahmin wearing a thread on his bare chest. But his moustache betrayed him. So the gate-keeper not only prevented his entry but also pushed him rudely to the street.
- * At that moment, as the feast was over inside the choultry, the leaves with food left over were thrown at the street. The unbearable burning of starvation for the past few days forced Ramasamy to compete with the street - dogs in eating the remnants of food in the leaves.
- * While eating that food, the eyes of Ramasamy looked at the letters carved at the frontal wall of the building. They revealed the truth that the choultry exclusively occupied by the highest caste viz., Brahmins, had been built only by a wealthy merchant of Dravidian Race from Tamil Nadu.
- * Suddenly in the mind of this young man, some questions could have sparked such as: “Why and how the Brahmins can obstruct the Dravidians from taking meals in the choultry although the choultry was built with the money of a Dravidian Philanthropist? Why the

Brahmins behaved so mercilessly and fanatically as to push the communities of the Dravidian race even to starvation - death by adamantly enforcing their evil casteism?"

- * No justifiable answers came to convince the judicious thinking of Periyar on the above questions.

- * The disgrace inflicted by the Brahmins at KAASI upon him without the least mercy, made a deep wound in the heart of Periyar and it inflamed intense hatred towards that Aryan race and their creation of innumerable Gods.

- * Though Kaasi (Varanasi) has been acclaimed as the most "sacred town" by the Brahmins, the worst ugly scenes of immoral activities, prostitution, cheating, looting, begging crowds for alms, floating dead bodies on the River Ganges turned Periyar to abhor that so-called holy-town. Consequently, a re-thinking on his renunciation led him to return to his family life.

- * On returning to Erode - his father delegated all his trade rights to this second son and renamed his major commercial concern under the title: "E.V. Ramasamy Naicker Mandi"

SELFLESS SOCIAL SERVICES

- * Besides being a well-known wealthy businessman in Erode Mr. E.V.R. entered into public life by rendering social services selflessly.

1905onwards 1905-06

- * One noteworthy instance: Once the dreadful contagious disease plague attacked Erode. Hundreds of people died and thousands fled for saving their life. But this noble man did not desert his native town like other rich merchants. He himself carried the dead bodies on his back to the cremation ground while even the close kith and kin did not touch the expired persons for last rites due to the fear of the contagion of the plague disease.

* He commanded enormous influence over other traders in the bazaar street of Erode. He mediated and solved many disputes among the businessmen with neutrality and uprightness.

FRIENDSHIP OF TAMIL SCHOLARS

*In his youthful years he was attracted by the Tamil scholar Pandithamani Ayothidhaasar who vehemently condemned the caste - system and Hindu religion of Brahmins with the principles of rationalism and Buddhism.

* There was a Tamil Scholar by name: Pulavar Marudhaiya Pillai at Karur. His logical arguments and daring condemnation of Hindu religion, caste-system, deceptive myths in the epics and Vedic sastras (Hindu Dogmas) spread by the Brahmins, had attracted admiration of even the ordinary rural people in the areas around Erode and Karur. His bosom - friendship played a major role in inculcating atheism firmly in the mind of Periyar and in moulding the latter as a probing rational thinker. Intimacy of another Tamil Scholar Sage KAIVALYAM had also enriched the rational intuition of Periyar. Many higher officials and learned persons like Engineer P.V. Manicka Naicker befriended this Erode Beacon, because of his kindling progressive views. 1909 * Unyielding to stiff protest of orthodox family

1918

members, Periyar arranged the remarriage of his sister's daughter who became a child widow at the age of 9.

SACRIFICES FOR FREEDOM MOVEMENT

* He became the Chairman of Erode Municipality * Despite his intense hatred towards the Hindu religion and its caste - system - particularly the cruel 'Untouchability' exerted by the

Brahmins to suppress the Dravidian race - the executive efficiency and the unshakable honesty of E.V.R. fetched the awards of many posts in various public institutions.

* Periyar was made Honorary Magistrate by the British Government.

* He held many honorary positions like the President, the Secretary, Vice-President etc., in various public institutions numbering 29 such as - District Board, Taluk Board, Urban Bank, Religious Davasthanam (Trust), Public Library, War Recruitment Committee, Association of Agriculturists, Association of Merchants, Mahajana School Committee... etc., * Many essential welfare schemes were implemented effectively by him. Particularly the drinking water scheme was skilfully executed. 1918 * While Periyar was the Chairman of Erode Municipality, friendship blossomed between himself and Mr. C. Rajagopalachariyar (Rajaji) who later became Governor - General of India.

* Mr. P. Varadharajulu Naidu and Mr. C. Rajagopalachariyar persuaded Periyar to join the National Congress party led by Mr. M.K. Gandhi. Resigning the Chairmanship of Erode Municipality, Periyar enrolled himself as member of that Congress party. 1920 * He ardently participated in the Non Co-operation movement launched against the British rule by 'Mahatma' Gandhi. On the latter's clarion call, Periyar resigned all the 29 public positions held by him. He gave up

1919

the family trade and closed the business concern which was earning Rs. 20,000 annually (in those days) when the price of a single gold sovereign was not even Rs. 10!.

* He defied the prohibitory order of section 144, promulgated at Erode for the first time and courted arrest.

* Periyar trusted and accepted Mahatma Gandhi as his leader. So, as a true disciple he began to execute every word of Gandhi into deed. One such example is Khadhi yarn spun by hand with Chakra. As soon as the command of Gandhi for wearing Khadhi cloth was announced, Periyar immediately shed away all his costly foreign clothes and began to wear Khadhi. Also he forced all the members of his family, including his mother, aged 80 years to wear Khadhi dress only! * Forsaking pomp hitherto enjoyed, Periyar implicitly enforced simplicity in every aspect of his life-journey. UPHOLDER OF PROHIBITION POLICY 1921 * The policy of Prohibition of Liquors was first conceived only at the house of Periyar. When Gandhi came to Erode and stayed at his residence, his wife Nagammal and his sister Kannammal explained unbearable agony of the wives tortured by their drunkard husbands and strongly stressed to draw a policy on prohibition of liquors. They also pleaded to launch an agitation in this regard.

* Their worthy suggestion was accepted at once by Gandhi. He announced that the Congress party men should undertake picketing in front of toddy shops throughout the country for urging the British Government to implement the policy of liquor-prohibition.

* To accomplish the command of Gandhi for upholding the policy of liquor - prohibition, Periyar had cut and uprooted more than 500 coconut - trees in his vast groves, from which toddy was procured. Such was his commitment to prohibition 1921 * At Erode, Periyar was leading the agitators and picketed before the toddy - shop. He was arrested and

1923

sentenced to undergo imprisonment for one month. 1922 * His wife Nagammal and Sister Kannammal also bravely jumped into the agitation and they led women volunteers for picketing in front of liquor-shop.

* When some Congress front-line leaders requested 'Mahatma' Gandhi to stop that agitation, he seriously told them that such a decision of stopping the agitation was not at the hands of himself but of two women at Erode, implying the wife and the sister of Periyar! PRESIDENT OF TAMIL NADU CONGRESS * Then, Periyar became the President of Tamil - Nadu Congress Committee.

* At the provincial conference of that party held at Tiruppur, he moved a resolution which urged that all the 'Untouchables' of Dravidian race, should be allowed to enter the temples for worship. But the Brahmins of the Congress Committee obstructed the passing the resolution. Provoked by their frenzy of caste - 'Varuna Dharma' Periyar declared that he would burn 'Manusmiruthi', 'Ramayana', etc., because these had been utilised by the wily Brahmins, as their religious weapons to suppress the Dravidian race with evil caste and superstition.

* The Government of Justice Party headed by Raja of Panagal passed an Act in the Madras State Legislative Council to create the Hindu Religious Endowment Board to end the exploitation of the Brahmins in Hindu temples. Though he was a Congress leader, Periyar supported that legislation brought by the Justice Party Government, due to his sincere concern for securing social justice as well as the rights of education, employment, economy, etc., to the Dravidian race oppressed by the Hindu Aryans.

FIGHTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

* Periyar appreciated the measures of the Justice Party

1924 Government for implementing the policy of Communal Reservation in education and employment through Government Order.

* To abolish the cruel system of 'Untouchability' sternly observed by the Brahmins as a mode of oppressing the Adhi Dravidas (the lowest of the Hindu Castes) like slaves - Periyar daringly led the agitation at VAIKOM town in Kerala State defying the prohibitory law order.

* In the temple town of Vaikom, the low caste people (Ezhavas) were not allowed to walk in the streets around the temple. So that 'Sathyagraha' - agitation was started by local Congress party people.

1924

* They requested Periyar to come from Tamil Nadu to take up the leadership of Sathyagraha. He led the agitation. Hence, he was arrested and sent to jail. In that case, he was sentenced twice to undergo imprisonment for six months for each term. The Sathyagraha went on for one year. Then the streets were thrown open to the Untouchables.

* That courageous social sacrifice and fight for the human rights, secured victory. The title of honour as 'Hero of Vaikom' was conferred on Periyar.

* He was awarded jail sentence for his earlier propagation for Khadhi cloth and for boycott of the foreign goods imported by the British Rule. 1924 * Discrimination was shown by V.V.S. Iyer, a Brahmin in charge of the National Training School hostel called 'Gurukulam' at Cheranmaadhevi near Thirunelveli, between the students of Brahmin caste and the Non-Brahmin castes, although that hostel-attached institution was funded by Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and also by Dravidian philanthropists. V.V.S. Iyer's caste-oriented approach in favour of the Brahmin students segregating the Dravidian students with caste-fanaticism, infuriated Periyar.

1924-Sep11 1924

Hence this Great humanist resigned the post of Secretary of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee.

* However Periyar was then elected as the President of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. He presided over the provincial conference of the Congress party held at Tiruvannamalai in November - 1924.

* Since 1920, he had been moving a resolution in Congress conferences demanding the Communal Reservation in Government jobs and education for the Non-Brahmins (Dravidians) to drive out their degradation and attain higher positions in all spheres of life on par with the dominating Brahmins. Similarly he proposed such a resolution at Tiruvannamalai Congress Conference also. But it was defeated by the Brahmins as they plotted at the Conferences of Tirunelveli (1920), Thanjavur (1921), Tiruppur (1922) and Salem (1923).

* Speaking at a public meeting at Salem, Periyar cautioned that unless the right of communal representation for the Non Brahmins was attained during the British Rule itself, the Brahmin supremacy could not at all be ended and the Dravidian race had to suffer under the tyranny of 'BRAHMNOCRACY' (The "Hindu" Centenary Special Number: page 337). Thus he even coined that new word.

Periyar published a Tamil Weekly under the title "Kudi Arasu" edited by himself to spread the principles of Self Respect for the awakening of the Dravidian race against the oppression by the Brahmins with their cruel caste - system and superstition of Hindu Religion.

* The first issue of 'Kudi Arasu' was released by the reputed Tamil Religious Scholar and eloquent orator by name Thiruppathiripuliyur - Gnaniyar Swamygal. 1925 - Nov.: *

1925 - May 2:

Again at the Congress conference held at Kancheepuram under the Chairmanship of the great versatile Tamil author, editor, orator and labour leader Thiru. Vi. Kalyana sundaranar, (Thiru. Vi. Ka.), the resolution was introduced demanding Communal Reservation for 50% for the Non brahmins by Periyar .

* As usual, the cunning Brahmins stalled its passage. That defeat enraged Periyar to such a brink of hatred as to quit the Congress Party, the hierarchy of which was completely captured and dominated by the Brahmins.

* While bidding farewell to the Congress, Periyar thunderously vowed that his only future task was to destroy that Brahmin Raj in party by all means. On his leaving the conference, a large group of front line leaders and volunteers also followed him. FOUNDER OF SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT 1925 December * At the same town Kancheepuram, Periyar organised shortly a parallel conference of Non-Brahmins. In his address, Periyar declared that the difference of racial identity between the Dravidians and the Aryans (Brahmins) had always been existing from very ancient times and its prevalence in the Congress Party also could not at all be denied. Therefore, he stressed the compelling need of the Dravidians to preserve the SELF RESPECT of their race, language, and culture which had been degraded by the Brahminical dominance of their caste system and superstition of Hindu religion.

* Thus Periyar founded the SELF-RESPECT Movement in 1925 after his exit from the Congress Party. 1926 * He participated in many Non-Brahmin Conferences held at various places of Tamil Nadu and propagated the principles of his SELF-RESPECT Movement to kindle the awakening of the Dravidian race for freeing themselves from the slavery enforced by Brahmins.

1927 1929

* Periyar met the Congress leader M.K. Gandhi at Bangalore and strongly argued that unless the poisonous caste-system called 'Varnashrama Dharma' was uprooted, the eradication of the 'Untouchability' stubbornly practised by the Brahmins could not at all be made possible. He also emphatically told Gandhi that before fighting for the freedom of India, three threatening evils - viz., (1) The Congress Party (Under the command of more Brahmin office - bearers), (2) Hindu religion with its caste - system and (3) the Dominance of Brahmins in the society should be put an end to first.

* When the strike of the workers of the Railway workshop at Nagappattinam broke out, Periyar, as the supporter of labourers was arrested and sent to jail.

* With the active support of Periyar, Mr. S. MUTHAIYA (Mudaliar), a Minister in the Dr. P. SUBBARAYAN's Independent Government, implemented the Communal Reservation scheme of the Justice Party. 1928 * Periyar published an English magazine under the title "Revolt" on 7- 11-1928.

* The first provincial conference of Self-Respect Movement was organised by Periyar at Chengalpattu in February 1929. Mr. W.P.A. Soundara Pandian, presided over that conference.

* He visited many European Countries like Egypt, Greek, Turkey, Soviet Russia, Germany, England (Britain), Italy, Spain, France, Portugal etc.,

* At Berlin, capital of Germany, Periyar visited several Socialist Associations and offices of Socialist magazines.

* In Russia (formerly Soviet Union) his stay was extended for a lengthy period of three months because he was invited to address many workers' meetings. Being the First Nation of Karl Marx's Communism, established by the great leader Mr.

1932

1932 Dec 28- 29

Lenin, the former Soviet Union (Russia) captivated very much the heart of Periyar.

June 20 * In England (Britain) Periyar addressed a huge labourers' public meeting with more than 50,000 people. He explained his principles on Rationalism as well as Socialism. Nov.

11 * Returned to Erode after completing the European journey via Colombo, Capital of Ceylon (Srilanka).

* In Erode at the residence of Periyar, a plan of Socialist Programme drafted by the great thinker Comrade M. Singaravelu was discussed by the followers of Self-Respect Movement.

1932* Periyar addressed many meetings throughout Tamil Nadu, propagating the 'Erode Plan of Socialism'.

* Mrs. E.V.R. Nagammal, the beloved wife of Periyar passed away and the burial took place the very next day.

1933 May 11:

* On 12-5-1933, he immediately left for Tiruchirappalli where he conducted an Inter-religious (Christian) Self Respect Marriage defying the section 144 promulgated in this connection and got arrested.

Nov. 26:* Periyar convened the conference of Self-Respect and Socialism at Erode.

* Because of the repression by the British Rule, 'Kudi Arasu'

1933

- Tamil Weekly was banned. Another magazine 'Puratchi' (Revolution) was published by Periyar.

1933 Dec - 30:

1934

* Periyar and his sister Kannammal were arrested and awarded imprisonment for an editorial in 'Kudi Arasu' weekly.

* The reputed Socialist leader later known as 'Lok Nayak' Jaya Prakash Narayan met Periyar at his residence and requested him to join the Socialist Party (Founded by Jaya Prakash).

1934* He brought out the Tamil weekly 'Pagutharivu' (Rationalism) on 12-1-1934.

* Periyar began to extend his support to the Justice Party. It started the Tamil weekly paper "Viduthalai" on 1-6-1935. Then it was entrusted to Periyar who published 'Viduthalai'

1935

as Tamil Daily Newspaper from 1-1-1937.

* From 13-1-1935 Periyar's Reform of Alphabets in Tamil language was adopted in all the papers and books published by him.

1936* In the conference held at Kanchipuram he arranged a resolution to be passed to oppose Hindi imposition.

* Periyar published 'Viduthalai' as a Tamil Daily Newspaper from 1-1-1937 undertaking its ownership.

1937

* Having become the Prime Minister of the former composite Madras Province, Mr. C. Rajagopala Achariyar announced that Hindi would be made a compulsory subject in school curriculum.

1937 Dec. 26 1938

* At Truchirappalli, 'Tamils Conferance' was convened. There Periyar declared that to defeat the dominance of Hindi over Tamil and Dravidian race, the only solution would be 'A separate Souvereign State' ie., 'Tamil Nadu for Tamils'.

1938

* In his book entitled as "The world to come" Periyar visuvalised many scientific inventions including the possibility of the "Test Tube Baby" which is now a reality!

* Periyar opposed the introduction of compulsory Hindi in schools by Mr. C. Rajagopala Achariyar (Rajaji) as Prime Minister of Madras Presidency who had earlier announced its introduction on 25-2-1938 but he actually introduced it on 23- 4-1938.

Periyar began to picket in front of the Hindu Theological School, Chennai from 4-6-1938 where Hindi was introduced as compulsory. He courted arrest and was sentenced on 6-12-1938 to undergo imprisonment for 2 years. He was lodged in the Govt. Central prison at Madras (now Chennai) and then he was transferred to the Bellary Jail (Andhra).

* While launching that agitation Periyar announced that Mr. C.N. ANNADURAI (Former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu) would be the First General in leading the picketing against Hindi.

* On 29-12-1938 Periyar was elected President of the Justice Party even when he was in Bellary Jail (Andhra).

* The title "Periyar" was conferred on him by Tamil Nadu Women Conference held in Madras on 13-11-1938 under the presidentship of NEELAMBIGAI AMMAIYAAR daughter of MARAIMALAI ADIGAL, a veteran pure Tamil Scholar.

* He toured North India where he met Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mohammed Ali Jinnah in Bombay. Mr. C.N. ANNADURAI (affectionately called as 'Anna'), accompanied him.

1940

* When the Congress party Ministry of Mr. C. Rajagopala Achariar resigned Periyar was invited by Mr. Arthur Hope Governor of Madras to form alternative Ministry since he was elected the leader of the Justice Party. But to concentrate fully on Social Reformation only, he rejected that enviable political offer.

* He raked up the issue of the demand for a separate Dravida Nadu to save Dravidian race and Tamil language from the dominance of Hindi and North Indian Hindu Capitalists at Thiruvavur Conference.

1944

* On 27-8-1944 the name of the Justice Party was changed as 'Dravidar Kazhagam' to signify purely as a social revolutionary movement for the emancipation of Dravidian race oppressed by Brahmins at the Provincial (special) Justice Party conference held at Salem and also not to contest elections and accept the titles given by British Govt.

1946

* On 11-5-1946, the famous "Blackshirts Conference" was held on the sands of the River Vaigai in Madurai when the conference pandal was set on fire by Brahmin - instigated hooligans. Periyar and his followers were stranded for the whole day.

1947 Aug 15

* When the whole of India and the world were jubilant on the attainment of Indian "Independence" on 15-8-1947, Periyar boldly called it a 'mourning' day for Tamils with

foresight. He called Independence of India was nothing but a 'made over' to Brahmins and North Indian Merchants (Baniyas) from British because the demand for separate sovereign nation to Dravidian Tamils was not fulfilled as done in the case of Muslims' demand for Pakistan.

1947* On 14-9-1947, the Dravida Nadu separation conference was held at a moffusil town, Cuddalore.

* The Blackshirts volunteer corps was banned by the Congress Government. The 18th Dravidar Kazhagam's State Conference was held at Tuticorn on 8-5-1948 and 9-5-1948 under the presidentship of Periyar when many thousands of Periyar's followers assembled, irrespective of Caste and Religion.

1948

* Periyar and Mr. C.N. Annadurai ('Anna') participated in the Anti-Hindi Volunteers Conference held under the leadership of Maraimalai Adigalar (the Champion for purity of Tamil) in Chennai.

* On 30-1-1948 Mr. Mahathma Gandhi fell a victim to the bullets of assassin Nathuram Godse, a Marathi Brahmin at New Delhi at his prayer meeting. Periyar condemned the assassination at all meetings held thereafter in Tamil Nadu. He suggested that India be named as "Gandhi Nation (Nadu)", a new religion with rationalism may be created as "Gandhi Religion" to mark his martyrdom.

* The second Anti-Hindi Agitation started at Kumbakonam on 10-8-1948 on the directive of Periyar.

* It was decided to show Black Flags to Mr.C.Rajagopalachariar when he visited Madras on 23-8-1948 as Governor General of India. Periyar organised a Black flag demonstration and

his followers were arrested and kept in the central jail at Madras (Chennai) from 22-8-1948 to 27-8-1948 and were released on 27-8-1948.

1949

* Periyar's marriage with Mani Ammai was held just to guard his health as well as the Movement's properties so that the Reformation movement would go on in future without stagnation.

1950

* He declared the Republic Day, 26-1-1950, as a Mourning Day for Tamils to condemn the oppressive rule of North Indian Capitalist Hindi fanatics.

* On 22-01-1950 Periyar was sentenced to undergo imprisonment for the publication of his book 'Ponmozhiyal' (Golden sayings).

* The Communal G.O. (Government Order) which was very dear to his heart was struck down as ultravires of the Constitution of India by the Madras High Court which was confirmed by the Supreme Court. Periyar roared like a lion, toured the whole of Tamil Nadu and awoke the people to see the danger ahead.

1951

* Sensing the formidable opposition engineered by Periyar, Constitution of India was amended for the first time by the Nehru Govt. at the Centre. This was the first Amendment to the Indian Constitution. Ultimately sub clause (4), was added to the Article 15 to admit of the provisions of Communal G.O. to preserve the rights and equal opportunities of Backward classes of India.

1952

* Periyar opposed the scheme of New Elementary education on the basis of the parents hereditary occupation, introduced by the then Chief-Minister Mr. C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji).

* Periyar and his followers erased with tar the Hindi-name Boards in all Railway stations all over Tamil Nadu.

1953

* In order to condemn idolatary worship and to show to the world that there was no divine power in idols, he organised a campaign. His followers and himself broke the idol of PILLAIYAR (Vinayaga) at public places.

* The intensity of Periyar's opposition against the educational reform-programme of Rajaji according to which all students should learn in schools their parents' profession was so formidable that made Mr. C. Rajagopala Achari (Rajaji) to quit the post of Chief - Minister. The indignation of Dravidian Race-Members of Legislative Assembly (M.L.A.s) also added fire to his downfall. (Rajaji) to quit the post of Chief-Minister. Consequently Mr. K. Kamaraj came to power as Chief-Minister of Tamil Nadu and he cancelled the much opposed educational reform as advocated by Periyar.

1954

* Periyar convened the Conference on Buddhism at Erode.

* Periyar along with his wife and some friends visited Myanmar (Burma) and Malaysia. At Mandalay (Myanmar) he attended the World Buddhist Conference where he met Mr. Mallala Sekara, a Buddhist Scholar and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He conversed with the latter for a long time and the subject of conversion to Buddhism came up for the discussion. He strongly advised Dr. B.R. Ambedkar not to leave Hinduism; because by his conversion to Buddhism

he would forfeit his right to criticise Hinduism and its untouchability. Periyar did not prefer conversion so that he could sustain the right to condemn the evils of Hindu religion.

1954 Dec* Periyar undertook his second tour to Malaysia and propagated his rationalistic principles in many places.

1955

* After returning to Tamil Nadu Periyar announced and fixed a date to set fire to the Indian National Flag in protest against the compulsory scheme of imposition of Hindi in Tamil Nadu, much against the wishes of the people.

* Periyar was arrested for his public agitation of burning the pictures of Rama - a Hindu deity at all public places, as a symbolic protest against the Aryan domination and degradation of the Dravidian leaders according to the Ramayana epic.

* The Trichi District Collector Mr. R.S. Malayappan a sympathizer of the Untouchables was given wantonly strictures in a judgement of the Madras High Court by two Brahmin Judges. Periyar exposed this judgement since R.S. Malayappan was an Officer from a Backward community. Periyar criticised the High Court judges for their hatred towards the depressed class officers in a public meeting held at Trichi Town Hall Square.

1957 Jan 18 * The historic meeting between PERIYAR and VINOBA BHAVE, the Founder-leader of 'Land Donation Movement' took place at Tiruchirappalli.

1957 Apr 23 * For criticising the judgement of Madras High Court delivered by two Brahmin Judges in the case of Trichi District Collector Mr. R.S. Malayappan, Periyar was charged with contempt of court and when the final hearing was heard (Before the judges Justice P.V.

Rajamannar and Justice A.S. Panchapakesa Iyer) he made a statement in the High Court, explaining how Brahmins conducted themselves with racial motive in several cases and opined that it was their inborn natural 'Dharma' (Divine Duty) to annihilate uprising Shudras and Panchamas of Dravidian Race.

* Probably this was then the first time that the judgement of High Court Judges came to be criticised publicly for which Periyar and his wife E.V.R. Maniammai were convicted.

1957

* On 3-11-1957 at Thanjavur a big conference was held to weigh Periyar against silver coins to commemorate his birthday.

* On the same day a resolution was passed calling upon the people of Tamil Nadu to come forward to burn the excerpt of Articles in the Constitution of India on 26-11-1957 as a protest against the inclusion of Article supporting casteism. Some 10,000 people burnt the excerpts of the Constitution of India. Only about 3000 of them were arrested and sentenced to undergo imprisonment from 6 months to 3 years Rigorous Imprisonment. This agitation rocked the whole of Tamil Nadu and that was the first time that such a big agitation against casteism was started. Some 15 to 18 persons died in and out of jail due to incarceration (A special act was passed to convict them).

* Against the caste system, another big agitation was started by Periyar. Brahmins used to inscribe the name in their Hotel Name-Boards as 'Brahmin Hotel' to spread the impression that Brahmins were superior caste. Periyar requested all his followers to erase the name 'Brahmin' in the Hotel Name Boards. Accordingly a campaign was started to erase the Brahmin-Name-Board in all Brahmin Hotels in Tamil Nadu. As a result of this agitation, the name 'Brahmin' in the hotel name-boards disappeared.

1958

* Periyar was arrested as a case was foisted on him by the Govt. of Tamil Nadu that he exhorted his followers to physically attack the Brahmins in his speeches delivered at Pasupathipalayam (Karur), Kulitalai and Tiruchirapalli and was sentenced to undergo imprisonment for 6 months by the District Sessions Court at Tiruchirapalli.

* Periyar and Ram Manohar Lohia, the Socialist leader of North India, met at Chennai and discussed their social and political service to the people.

1959

* He undertook a tour of North India addressing meetings at Kanpur, Lucknow, New Delhi and other places. 1960 * He burnt the map of India excluding Tamil Nadu, explaining that the Central Government Raj (Rule) is a Brahmin Raj. * A protest day was observed by Periyar all over Tamil Nadu against the Supreme Court judgement which had crippled the operation of the Tamil Nadu Land Ceiling Act which was rectified by Amendment to the Constitution.

* Mr. C.N. Annadurai became the Chief-Minister of Tamil Nadu, his party (DMK) having secured the majority of seats in the Tamil Nadu Assembly. He went to Tiruchirappalli and sought Periyar's greetings, goodwill and advice.

1967

* Periyar decided to extend his support to the D.M.K. Ministry. Mr. C.N. Annadurai declared in the State Assembly that he dedicated his 'Ministry' to Periyar. He also enacted the Self-Respect Marriage Act legalising all the marriages so far conducted on Self-Respect Marriage System devoid of rituals.

* Mr. C.N. Annadurai, a lieutenant of Periyar, brought a legislation renaming Madras State as Tamil Nadu State and also introducing the two language formula (Tamil and English) for Tamil Nadu, instead of the 3 language formula prescribed by the Central Govt. then. These three achievements are the mile stones of his ministry.

1968

* As a true rationalist disciple of Periyar the Chief Minister ANNA directed to throw away the pictures of all Hindu deities from the Govt. offices through a circular signed by the then Brahmin Chief Secretary.

* Periyar observed a day for “Condemnation of the exploitation of North Indian Business Magnates”.

* He was invited to address Minorities Conference at Lucknow (Capital of Uttar Pradesh province).

* The Ramayana, Epic of Aryans, was burnt all over Tamil Nadu as a mark of protest against cruel treatment of Dravidians by the Aryans in the Ramayana.

1969

Feb - 3 * Chief Minister ANNA expired. Periyar plunged into profound grief and expressed that the future of entire Tamil Nadu had become darkened due to the demise of ANNA.

* Periyar announced a Programme of agitation to enter the Sanctum Sanctorum of temples to eradicate the caste discrimination practised, according to which only Brahmins could become Archakas (Priests) and perform worship (poojas) in Sanskrit language only instead of Tamil.

* The Tamil Bi-monthly, the “Unmai” (Truth) was first started at Tiruchirapalli by Periyar. First issue was released by Dr. K. Veeramani, then General Secretary of DravidarKazhagam.

1970

* The UNESCO, an international branch organisation of the United Nations, conferred on Periyar a glorious title, the citation of which read as “Periyar the prophet of New Age, Socrates of South East Asia, Father of the social Reform Movement, and Arch enemy of ignorance, superstitions, meaningless customs and baseless manners” - UNESCO 27- 6- 1970. The award was presented by the Union Education Minister Dr. Triguna Sen under the presidentship of Chief Minister Kalaingar M. KarunaniDhi.

* Periyar inaugurated a new forum, called the Rationalist Forum, a non-political social organisation, enlisting the Government and private Employees and also others who subscribe to the views of “Rationalism”.

* A legislation was passed in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, enabling persons belonging to all castes to become Archakas (Priests) in Temples. Periyar demanded such a legislation, to abolish castes and to establish equality of persons irrespective of caste at all places.

* Periyar inaugurated the English monthly, the “Modern Rationalist”, the need for which was keenly felt by English knowing Rationalists.

1970 Nov-1:

* Mumbai (formerly Bombay) Dravidar Kazhagam arranged Birth-Day Celebrations for Periyar (September 17) and Anna (Sep. 15). Accompanied by EVR Mani Ammai and General Secretary of Dravidar Kazhagam Mr. K. Veeramani, Thanthai Periyar travelled in his

van from Chennai and attended the above two functions besides some more meetings in Mumbai for three days from First November, 1970.

1971

Mar * After the 1971 Assembly election to Tamil Nadu, the new D.M.K. Ministry was sworn in under the Chief Ministership of Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi.

* Thanthai Periyar graced that grand function. After assuming charge of Ministership, every Minister came before Periyar and received his hearty greetings.

Sep 17 * At Erode, the home-town of Periyar, his statue was unveiled by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Hon. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi. Revered Kundrakudi Adigalar Dheivasigamani presided over that function.

Nov 11 * At Salem, a splendid function was held. A throne of silver was presented to Periyar by the Public of Salem. 1972 Aug 13: * At Cuddalore, the statue of Periyar was unveiled by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Hon. M. Karunanidhi. The Chairman of the Legislative Council Mr. C.P. Chitrarasu presided over the function.

1973 Sep 16,17 * Periyar happily participated in his 95th Birth-Day Celebrations. The Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (A.D.M.K.) General Secretary M.G. Ramachandran offered laurels and a purse to Periyar.

1973 Sep 30 * A huge 'Conference of Blackshirts' was conducted at Madurai City. The statue of Thanthai Periyar was unveiled by Tamil Nadu Minister Naaval Dr. V.R. Nedunchezian under the Chairmanship of Minister Panruti S. Ramachandran.

1973 Dec 8,9 * As his last agitational social service, Periyar convened the 'Conference for Eradication of Social Degradation' with extreme enthusiasm at Periyar Thidal, Chennai - 600

007. Many historic resolutions were then passed. On the 2nd day of that conference, Periyar made a clarion call to all Tamilians to strive hard for the abolition of casteism and social degradation imposed by Brahmins.

Dec 19 * At Thiyagaraya Nagar, Chennai - Periyar delivered his last but immortal speech (the Swansong) like an ever memorable dying declaration.

Dec 20 * Due to unbearable acute pain of Hernia disease - Periyar was admitted in the Government General Hospital in Chennai.

Dec 21 * On his wish Periyar was taken to the Christian Medical College (C.M.C.) Hospital at Vellore.

Dec 24* The Greatest Original Thinker and the Resolute Rationalist of the World, Periyar, breathed his last, putting billions of rationalists, Tamilians of Dravidian race and admirers all over the globe into unbearable agony with ocean of tears

. * An official State mourning was announced by the Chief Minister Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi and Gazette extraordinary was issued by the Govt. of Tamil Nadu.

Dec 25 * A state funeral with police honours was arranged at Madras. His body was kept in the Rajaji Hall for the public to pay their respects when dignitaries, his followers, friends, and a host of others assembled in millions. The funeral procession started in the evening and reached the Periyar Thidal at Vepery, Chennai - 600 007 where his body was laid to rest.

Leaders like former Chief Minister Mr. K. Kamaraj and Kalaingar Karunanidhi were by the side of the body till the burial. A Govt. holiday was declared on 24-12-1973 by the State Govt of Tamil Nadu.